



12 June 2006

## **SAFETY ALERT**

### **Soldier Fatality from Lightning Strike**

1. On 10 Jun 06, one Soldier was killed and three others were injured from a lightning strike. The Soldiers were participating in an operational field exercise and were attempting to upright a tent that had blown over and in which they had been sheltered.
2. This accident is currently under investigation and specifics are not known at this time. However, it is important that we address issues associated with lightning strikes now to prevent the recurrence of a similar tragedy, particularly as we head into an intense summer thunderstorm period. During both field and garrison training, the best method of maintaining situational awareness regarding thunderstorms and lightning is by monitoring weather reports. This is a command and leadership responsibility.
3. The following include safety tips to be directed by leaders and followed by Servicemembers in the event their unit is caught in a thunderstorm with potential lightning.
  - If you are caught outside in a thunderstorm with lightning, seek shelter in a sturdy structure or in a hard-top vehicle. Sit with your hands in your lap. Electronic communications equipment should be shut off, if possible; use only if absolutely necessary.
  - Refrain from using telephones if possible. Avoid large metallic pieces of equipment, and attempt to stay away from vehicles that are loaded with explosives or ammunition.
  - When caught out in the open, stay away from tall trees or structures that represent the highest points in an area. In a wooded area, seek shelter under a thick growth of small trees. Avoid tall objects, isolated trees, bodies of water, sheds, and fences.
  - If you are part of a group and in the open, spread out and squat down in an attempt to keep as low a profile as possible while keeping both feet planted firmly on the ground. (Do not sit or lie on the ground.)
4. Most lightning strikes occur after the thunderstorm has passed. Wait approximately 30 minutes after the storm passes to resume activities. If you see lightning, begin counting seconds; if you hear thunder within 30 seconds, you are in a hazard area.
5. The loss of this Soldier is a tragedy for us all. We must learn from this and ensure we take maximum precautions during periods of thunderstorm and lightning activities. I charge all commanders and leaders to intensely educate and supervise our Servicemembers to guard against the potential for another loss of life. Our safety approach is "No Loss of Life." Together we can achieve this.

B. B. BELL  
General, US Army  
Commander

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